

MR. LOUIS DUBEY, BAYPORT, MICHIGAN.

INTERVIEWED BY

WM. WAKEHAM AND RICHARD RATHBUN,

AUGUST 30, 1894.

Expressive
Loc.

I have been fishing in Saginaw Bay since 1874. Is now fishing at Heisterman Island. I have fished off that island 9 years. Before that I fished around Point Lookout and the Charity Islands. I have fished all around the bay. Pound nets are the only thing that have been fished in the bay (except fykes).

P.

Fykes

A few hoop nets are fished. They fish probably 150 fyke nets around the shore in the bay. They have been fishing them for this last 8 or 10 years, but never used to fish them. (They are fished by men from here mostly, but I think some of the men come from Lake Erie?) The fyke net does

58

*Fishes,
walleye
perch.*

not catch many yellow pickerel. It takes mostly perch and such fish as that. They are fished mostly in the bayous and such places as the Middle grounds. They will set in from 3 to 8 feet. The hoop is 4 or 5 feet around. They fish them early in the fall along about the first of October and in November. They fish them the most in the winter. They just cut a hole in the ice to get at them. They catch quite a number of fish. I used to fish them myself. They catch rock bass, sunfish, pike, and fish that go in the harbor for the winter. They do not catch many herring. They catch bullheads and a few mud bass.

*rock bass
sunfish
Eels
herring
bullheads,
mud bass*

Seines

They have not used any seines here to amount to anything for about 12 or 15 years. They used them then (previously) all along the shore of the bay. They used to use them on the outside of the point here, and

Seines.
w.f.

would catch a good many whitefish. They used to use them up towards the mouth of the river, and in the river. The water here is about 3 feet shallower than when I began fishing. They use to seine at Green's Point about 5 miles west of Point Aux Greis. Between Point Aux Greis and Pine River. All those places used to be good seining grounds, but they have not seined there for 10 or 12 years. They gave up the seines on account of driving stakes for trap nets. They would not take their stakes out, and would fill their seining grounds full of stakes, and I guess they can fish the trap nets cheaper than the seines, for the trap net is always fishing and the seine only when the men are at work. Before they got the traps in Saginaw Bay they used to fish chiefly with seines. They would get in the seines, whitefish from 3 to 10 lbs., all shallow wa-

w.f.

w/f.
Cat
walleye
walleye
Spawning
ter whitefish. They would seine for them in the spring. Never seined in the fall as it would not pay. The whitefish would not come up here at all late. We do not *w/f.* catch any spawning whitefish in this bay. I have fished on the Charity Islands and it was very seldom we would find one ripe enough to spawn. We always pulled out about November 15 there.

Spearing
They do a little spearing about here, but it does not amount to much. Years ago there were quite a few men went out on the ice, about 300 men; and I do not believe they caught 3 tons of pickerel. They would be from 2 lbs. up to 7; all big fish.

walleye
Hooks
Cat
There is no hook and line commercial fishing except there are catfish lines set in the spring, but it hardly pays them to fish. They set long lines and put hooks every 7 or 8 feet. I used to set about

hooks
cat
perch
walleye
walleye
spawning
P.
season

1,500 hooks. Would get nothing much but catfish, and occasionally a perch or pickerel, but not many.

Pickerel, when we fish here in the spring, have all spawned. I never begin driving stakes until about the 15th of April. We begin to put the twine in the first of May, but do not get any fish as they have not come down yet from above. It takes me 2 1-2 months to set all my twine. I do my driving before I set any twine.

walleye
herring
w.f.
Season

June is our best month for spring fishing, and up to the first of July. We get pickerel, herring and whitefish in the spring. Some years we catch as many herring in the spring as in the fall. We get a number of whitefish early in the spring if we have good clear weather. When there are lots of freshets there are no whitefish come in the bay here, as the water is too dirty.

Freshets
keep out
w.f.

P.
season

In the fall we begin to fish again about the first of September and expect to pull out about November 10, and are all out by November 15. We do not fish later because we are afraid of getting caught in the ice. I lost one net last fall.

descrip
(depth)

My deepest pot is 21 feet. I cross the inside channel and then come on the bars. I set 6 nets inside the bar. Where I am it takes 6 nets to reach 20 feet of water. I begin to set the leaders about 10 feet from shore. The inside pot would be in about 13 feet. I have 5 pots in a mile. I have gaps between them to allow boats to go through. Boats drawing 8 or 9 feet of water come in there. I drive one pot at the end of the lead and reverse on the other, and leave a gap 10 or 12 rods wide. We have a pot on each end of the lead where there is a gap. Do not put any lights on

P.

them.

96.

There are as many pounds in Saginaw Bay as ever, and more I think.

Season

We do not fish in the summer because the water is too shallow and gets too warm. About July 15 the water is poison to fish and they have got to get out.

descrip

I make the pots 28 and 32 feet square. The leaders are 75 and 80 rods.

P.
depth-
leading

If you have a bar where it is shallower at one end than the other the fish will sometimes lead toward the shallow water. Sometimes the inside pot on a double leader will catch more fish than the other. The fish lead inshore in the fall, and they do in the spring when they come ashore to spawn. I have seen nets in 5 feet of water and they would get them so full you could hardly lift them, and the outside nets would hardly have fish enough to eat. That would be pickerel,

Inner outer
pot-

valley
direction they
lead

and at the head of the bay.

We do not get many spawning pickerel here.

At the head of the bay they are all through fishing when we begin. But for the last 10 years they do not get many spawning pickerel in Saginaw Bay. The seasons are more stormy ^P

than they used to be. A few years ago we would have but one blow in a season, both spring and fall, and now it blows about all the time. The worst time in the spring is generally for 2 or 3 weeks after the ice goes out, and in the fall November is the worst

month. I think the shallowing of the water ^{round} hurts the fishing. The water is 3 feet shallower than it was when I came here. On the bar outside on this reef we used to get 12 feet of water and now you hardly get 9 feet in the same place.

We make the mesh of the leader 6 inch and the tunnel and heart 4 and 5 and the crib ^P

● walleye
spawning

storm

Shoaling of
water
hurts fishing

T.
descrip

2 1-2. They have always been that size.

(mostly herring)
fishing now

gilling

Most of the fishing now is herring fishing and they have to have a small mesh. Some use 2 inch mesh in the pots. I do not catch 2 fish a year fast in the leaders. When a net is arranged in a certain way the fish will gill all over. If you go to work and set the nets right against the fish they would all gill. You want to set it at an angle. Very few herring gill in the pot.

Herring
Size

Small whitefish

I do not get any herring too small to dress in the fall. They run probably 2 to a lb. I do not catch any small whitefish with the herring. But where Gillingham's fish they get small whitefish, and at Tawas Point they get them. Our herring will average about 12 inches. What are smaller than that will go through our 2 1-2 inch mesh. I have seen lots of fishermen from Lake Erie who say our herring are larger than Lake

Erie herring. I was fishing a net last fall with a 6 inch mesh heart and lead and that is the one that caught the most of my herring. They are a fish that do not try to get through the mesh much. I do not catch 1,000 less than 1 lb. pickerel in all the season.

I think a man ought not to catch a whitefish under 1 lb. dressed. On these grounds the whitefish do not come inshore and all we catch are big whitefish. On the bars they fish small mesh. They fish 4 inch leaders and 3 1-2 inch heart. They catch more whitefish up north in a week than all the fishermen around Saginaw Bay will destroy in a month. The whitefish do not seem to stay around Saginaw Bay.

For pickerel the smallest size should be not less than 1 lb. I think a lb. pickerel would be a pretty nice fish. That would

leading
walleye under 1 lb. abundance

w.f. min. size

big in bay

(P. descit)

amt. of catch

min. size walleye

be about 14 inches long. I think the men ought to throw back every small pickerel they catch, and they can do it. They are able to tell the size if they know anything about fish.

I think they could throw the small whitefish out if they tried, and were willing to do it. It takes a little more time to do it. One fall 4 or 5 years ago, a man wanted me to put him up 1-4 bbl. of these little whitefish, and I tried all the fall and could not get but 2 or 3 dozen.

The fish we get in the pound nets are herring, pickerel, and some whitefish, and we get a few lake trout in the fall, but not many. Some falls would not get 500 lbs. They do not come up as far as this.

We get a few saugers here. They are in dirty water, and when the water is dirty we catch quite a few. They are a great fish

Throw back
Small walleye

Throw back
Small w.f.

Small w.f.
abundant

P.
Catch
herring
walleye
w.f.
trout

Sauger

gilling

to gill. Most all we get are caught in the twine. They run from 3-4 to 1 1-2 lbs. We do not sell them except as we let them go with the pickerel. They go about the same as the pickerel.

Perch

The perch generally come with the pickerel in the spring, and I guess they spawn ahead of the pickerel. We get some big lifts of perch sometimes, 3 or 4 tons at a lift of 5 nets. We also get them in the fall again, in the last of September, and catch them pretty thick until it freezes up, when they go into these rivers. They save perch 4 ounces in weight, but out here we do not catch anything less than 1-2 lb., and lots of them will go 1 1-2 lbs. In the spring we get quite a good many small perch, but we do not sell them, and throw them away. A man could save all the small perch if he wished to and not gill one.

bass

A do not believe I caught 6 black bass all the spring. Outside we do not set early enough for them. Now is the time for them. They come in June, but I did not catch any this spring. I used to set a net in 8 or 10 feet of water and get lots of black bass, but I do not care anything about catching them. There is no money in them so you might just as well let them go. There is a good deal of sport fishing for black bass. *Sport* You have to wait on the sportsmen for nothing and show them the fishing grounds.

Cat

We catch lots of catfishes in the pound nets. We have but one kind of catfish here. We catch the same catfish in the pounds that they catch with hook and line.

Sturgeon

We get a few sturgeon, and used to get more years ago, but they fished altogether in these bays for sturgeon to get the eggs. They have not been doing it for this last 6

or 7 years, but there are men now who save the eggs when they get them. We used to get any amount of them here 15 years ago, and used to throw them away then until Sherman came here and bought the eggs, and he put the fish up to 50 cents apiece, and then up to \$1.00 and \$1.25. The only way to preserve the sturgeon would be not to catch them, or to throw them out when you did catch them. It would not hurt me any for I do not catch enough to amount to anything, and I would rather throw the small whitefish away also.

*n.b. small
throw away*

*Saginaw R.
destruction of
fish
with
small valley
traps*

The way they kill the fish here is in the ^{valley} Saginaw River in the winter. They fish trap nets all winter, and that is where the little pickerel go for a harbor in the winter. They catch as many as 8,000 where it takes 10 or 15 to make 1 lb. I used to fish in the river myself and it was nothing

to get a big trap net boat full of pickerel.

Suckers,
I think they made a poor law when they said suckers 12 ounces, for suckers eat the spawn of all the other fish.

walleye movement
Spawning
Small walleye River
Season of catching in river
destruction
P. descrip
mesh & walleye
There are no pickerel at all go in the river in the spring any more as the water is too dirty. They spawn all over the shores inside the bay. The little pickerel go up the river in the fall; and they catch lots of pickerel all winter that it takes 3 or 4 for a lb. When they catch the most of those little pickerel is around the holidays when it freezes up, and those little fish would stay in there all winter if they did not catch them, and they destroy more fish in one year than all the trap nets do in 20 years in the bay. They use 4 inch mesh in the leaders in the river and 2 inch in the pot. These little pickerel have to be crowded and you have to wait for them or

they will not go out of a 2 inch mesh. When that 2 inch mesh is tarred it will only be 1 3-4 inch.

Once in a while we get a white bass here.

I have caught eels here. This spring I caught 5 or 6 measuring about 4 feet. I have never seen any much less than 3 1-2 feet. They catch them about all over the bay and they go up the river also. I heard they planted them here, but I do not know if it was so. I think the eels destroy the other fish.

We get the rock bass here and sunfish.

We get quite a few sheepshead here; and I sold all mine last fall for 1 cent a lb. in Bay City. I got some weighing about 20 lbs. We get the lawyer. Get a few grass pike. They are generally in the little creeks and not much in deep water. The fyke nets catch them. There are about as

white bass

eels

*rock bass
sunfish
sheepshead*

*ling
cod*

many pike here as I have ever seen in this bay. We do not get hardly any maskinonge, just once in a while one.

Get lots of suckers. I think it would be better to take the protection off them and put it on the pickerel. I have opened suckers and they were chuck full of pickerel spawn, and I have opened sturgeon and took out as much as my hat would hold of fish spawn.

We get the moon-eye. Get a few menominee whitefish, or what we call pilot fish. I have seen them as big as 2 lbs.

I think the spawn we found in the sturgeon was pickerel spawn. We find it in the spring.

We do not get the blue fin or the long jaw here.

We catch quite a few German carp now. I caught 2 this spring, one weighing about 10

Maskinonge

Suckers

*moon eye
menominee*

Sturgeon

*bluefin
long jaw*

G. carp

and the other 15 lbs. I secured and ate one of them and the other got away from me. It tasted pretty good. Here you can get 10 or 12 cents per lb. for them. They eat them just as a curiosity.

I do not believe there is one man out of a thousand who would like to see fish protected better than I would. I always tell my men not to save the small fish. / I used to fish in Saginaw River and all around me they would catch those little pickerel, and they would get 4 cents a lb. for them. The fishing for the little pickerel is carried on all up the river from the light house up to the bend of the river, about a mile from the mouth of the river. The best month to show this destruction is December or January. They catch those little pickerel about the first ice in the river. Henson, Beutel, Panniman, and all of the, buy these

Desires protection

Throwout small fish

Destruction of little walleye

little fish. You will see lots of these little pickerel not over 4 inches long in with the rest of them. These fish will all live when they get that big. They destroy too many fish for the money they make out of it. Those men all fish outside also. Most of them will take those little fish, and they are the ones who do the kicking if they do not catch them outside. It is the men who own the grounds that get the money out of it now and not the men who do the fishing.

Explosives
I never heard of any explosives being used around here.

offal
I bury all my offal, and most of them bury it, but you can catch men throwing out boat load after boat load. I think it should be prohibited. I have found it in my twine so that it stunk so I could hardly go near the net. It is bad for the fish and it is an unhealthy thing also. They

claim there has lots of it been done this last 4 or 5 years.

We are not troubled with sawdust down here, but there is lots of dirt in the water coming from the mills and rivers. It is slabs, bark and everything. The slabs do not get down now like they used to. I do not think there are any tanneries anywhere around here, and no pulp mill.

The salt works do a good deal of harm. The salt works are along the river between the mouth of the river and Saginaw. Some of the salt works make as high as 1,000 barrels in 24 hours. It is the waste brine that they let go into the river. Where they leave it on the ground nothing will grow. I think that should be stopped.

I used to fish in Saginaw River when we could catch whitefish all summer 2 or 3 miles up. I have caught them with the hook

Sawdust

mill refuse

*tanneries
pulp mills*

salt works.

*up
in river
hooks*

and line, using bait in the shape of angle worms and little fish, but would catch them just as quick on a bare hook as on a baited hook.

dredging

The government dredges the channel in the harbor and they dump the stuff right close to the mouth of the river and it goes right back in again. They have to dredge it out every year. They dump it east of the river. We used to have 8 or 10 feet of water there, and now we run aground in 4 or 5 feet. I have seen them dumping the stuff and it consists mostly of sand and clay, and stuff of all kinds. They are not extending the wharves out into the river much. I suppose they could dump the stuff where it would not hurt anything, but they would have to go a long ways.

logs

The (local) rafting does a good deal of harm in the bay. At Point Aux Gries it has

killed all the fishing grounds by rafting logs out of the rivers. That is all done away with now. Last year was the last of the rafting at the Rifle and this year was the last year at the Aux Gries. I do not know as the big rafts which they haul across from Georgian Bay hurt the fishing much, but they fetch across lots of dirt and bark.

Coast

It will hurt gill netting worse than trap nets. All our trap nets suffer from is the saw logs.

I think a man should use nothing smaller than 5 inch leads. It does not make any difference about the pots. A 4 inch mesh should be small enough for the hearts. I

descrip.
proper mesh

would protect them by throwing out the small fish, and if they would all do that they would help themselves. A man would regulate his nets if he was obliged to throw away the young fish. I do not think the fyke

Throw out
small fish

Fyke nets
not harmful

nets hurt the fish any. I think a man
should have nothing smaller than 2 1-2 inch
sides and 2 inch back in the pots (of pounds).
I do not think the heart should be less than
4 inches, in the lake. It is all right for
these fellows who fish inside to have 3 inch
for perch.

I think they should do something to pro-
tect the little pickerel, even after the
winter fishing. I think there are very few
spawn pickerel come here in the spring.
They have come here to get the eggs and
would not get a can full.

We get good herring fishing in November,
as long as we can fish. The whitefish we
get up in the bay do not amount to anything.
I would probably get 100 lbs. a day out of
12 or 14 nets, and none of them are ready
to spawn. The herring begin to spawn about
November 20. They have just about begun to

P.
proper mesh

Walleye
protect small
Spawning

Herring
season

big
quantity

Spawning

Herring
Spawning

F. Bon

spawn when we begin to pull out. There is not much difference in the time of the whitefish and herring spawning. I think the whitefish spawn about November 12 or 15. There are not many in this bay who catch spawning whitefish, not enough to hurt the fishery. I think there is more hurt where they capture the little whitefish. They can throw them out if they are careful. A man can handle them with scoop nets all right. I do not think handling them with a scoop net would kill them, and they are not obliged to handle them with their hands.

I think a man should spend the time to take out the little fish. The (State) Fish Commission arrested Benson in Bay City 2 or 3 times last winter for buying the small fish, and they could arrest these men for catching them also. There is no protection now for the pickeral and there should be.

w.f.
catching young
harmful
throw out

Walleye
not protected

Walleye

Walleye
young hardy
Small w.
disturb
Small walleye
throw out
Small

P.
mesh
Some men too
mean to save
fish

Little fish
hurt market

Saginaw Bay,
Aunt. & catch
Walleye
beaver

They can save the little pickerel all right
as they are a hard fish to kill. The small
whitefish do not go up very far, but stay
around the Charities and around Tawas.
Out of 12 pound nets we would probably get
a ton of pickerel and we could sort out the
little ones very easily. You catch a man
2 or 3 times taking small pickerel and put
a good big fine on him, and he will soon be
careful. If they alter the mesh in the
pounds we would not catch any herring here,
There are lots of men I know who, if they
could save the fish, would not do it, as
they are too darn mean. The little fish
hurt our big fish market. I would rather
sell one ton of fish for 8 cents a lb. than
to sell 3 or 4 tons for 2 cents a lb.
I do not think there are more fish taken
from Saginaw Bay now than there has been.
They do not get as many pickerel. I never

m.

Walleye

Waskany
then

Reg

J. Gen

*Suckers,**Walleye
abundance**Seasons
vary*

saw so many suckers caught as this last season. I think there were more pickerel in the bay this year than for several years before. There is a difference in the seasons. If we have much rain it brings down the dirt from the rivers and when the spring is comparatively dry the water will be clear.

*Nets,
where purchased
care etc*

We get our nets from Boston and New York. I buy my twine from Benson. The twine is all white when we get it. Gillingham uses tar that costs him \$20. a barrel. They tried it this spring for the first time. They expect it will last longer than the other. Twine here in the pot will last about 3 years. In the summer we could rot a net in one month and we save money by pulling out our twine then. We tar our nets but once. It does not burn our hands, but the dust that comes out of it burns our faces. The leaders generally last 4 or 5

*P
life*

years. Flood, wood, and logs, is what ruins our twine a good deal. Our nets begin to rot first about 2 or 3 feet from the surface and not so much at the surface. At the surface it gets washed by the sea and keeps cleaner. In the corners it does not last so long. That is where the fish turn and rub up against it and get it all slimy.

